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USTR and U.S. AID Announce Funding for WTO Technical Assistance for Africa

The Office of the United States Trade Representative and the U. S. Agency for International Development (U.S. AID) today announced that the United States will provide a grant of \$650,000 to the World Trade Organization's (WTO) "Global Trust Fund for Technical Assistance."

The money will be used for the WTO to conduct educational workshops on trade policy and WTO rules for countries in Africa, and will also fund the development of computer-based training modules on WTO Agreements. In addition, once these training modules have been developed, they will be available on CD-ROM and accessible on the Internet, thus allowing a broader reach of WTO training programs throughout the world.

"The grant is a critical component of U.S. efforts to work in partnership with African countries in the WTO, and to support African efforts to strengthen their economies through market-oriented reforms and increased levels of trade and investment," said Deputy U.S. Trade Representative Susan G. Esserman. "Strengthening the capacity of African countries to participate in the WTO benefits both the people of Africa and the global economy."

The WTO trust fund for technical assistance relies solely upon voluntary or extra-budgetary contributions from WTO Members and comes as a response to specific requests for technical assistance from countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Funding for the \$650,000 grant to the WTO was provided through the U.S. AID's Africa Trade and Investment Policy Program (ATRIP), which funds activities to provide technical assistance for policy reform or to support U.S.-Africa business linkages.

Over the past two years, the United States has committed more than \$600 million toward

strengthening the trade-related capacity of developing countries and transitional economies. This new program is a part of the much larger bilateral assistance program on economic matters. In addition to this grant, this year the ATRIP program will provide almost \$4 million in technical assistance for African countries on standards, customs valuation, and training focused on implementation and compliance with WTO Agreements.

At President Clinton's direction, USTR and other agencies have been working extensively during the past year and a half to strengthen cooperation and coordination with African countries on WTO issues. These efforts have included a seminar for all sub-Saharan African countries on technical assistance resources available on WTO and trade-related issues, a ministerial meeting for African Trade Ministers in Washington, as well as increased dialogue with sub-Saharan African missions in Geneva.

Next week, Ambassador Esserman will travel to Gabon for a WTO meeting in which more than 50 African trade ministers will participate in workshops designed to enable African trade officials and private-sector partners to learn more about WTO rules and agreements. The workshops should also help the African countries in their technical preparations for future trade negotiations.

For further detailed information on U.S. technical assistance programs, a survey of assistance programs can be found on the USTR and U.S. AID Web sites, www.ustr.gov and www.usaid.gov.